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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAN

Editorial Commentary

-- "Iran and us and the conflict over the region"

Columnist Yaser Za'atreh writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Ad-Dustour (08/24): "It is obvious that there are those who are trying to start a war, a cold one in the least, between the Arabs and Iran or between the Shiites and the Sunnis. Had the starters of this war been those who are concerned for the Sunnis or those who are truly afraid of an American-Zionist-Iranian alliance, we would have accepted the matter. Yet, what we see says otherwise. There are those who are targeting anyone that resists the Zionist project while, at the same time they declare war on Iran using sectarian contexts to hide their political agenda.... The battle between Iran and the United States is not a silly Indian film and it is not just a conspiracy being drawn in the White House between the Mullas and the neo-conservatives. It is a genuine struggle that could reach the point of sieges and sanctions and may end up in war if Iran persists on the nuclear issue. Bush's Zionist team does not become the enemy except against those that stand up to his political program that is in favor of his mother country, Israel, and he is not concerned for Sunnis or Shiites; a Shiite who allies with them is a friend, and the Sunni is no different from that.... What is going on is a targeting of all the nation, and particularly those that refuse to submit to the agenda of the neo-conservatives. There is no need for too much analysis here, those that agree with their agenda are the accused ones, not those that resist it and pay for their resistance with blood and sacrifice and the threat of sanctions."

-- "End the wrangling"

Centrist, elite English daily Jordan Times (08/24) editorializes: "The diplomatic wrangling over Iran's nuclear program is yet again reaching a crescendo. With an August 31 deadline for Iran to suspend its nuclear enrichment program looming, noises are being made by the various UN Security Council members about what may or may not happen once that deadline passes and depending on Iran's actions.... Iran, meanwhile, is playing for time. Its standing in the region has significantly improved as a result both of the US-led invasion of Iraq and Israel's failed attempt at bringing Hizbollah to heel. Furthermore, flush with money from high oil prices, Tehran perhaps believes it can afford to stall. That would be a mistake. It is better for Iran, and for the region as a whole, to end the wrangling over the nuclear program. Iran has already made progress. At stake is not Iran's civilian nuclear program. Indeed, a package deal of incentives proposed some months ago is believed to include

significant aid for Iran's civilian nuclear program, in addition to an end to US sanctions on certain products, not to mention a possible thawing of diplomatic relations between Tehran and Washington. All of these would be significant achievements for Iran, and Tehran should start thinking of the endgame.... On a more immediate level, Tehran also needs the US to publicly rule out any military action. Tehran, especially in the current regional climate, sees no reason to back down if confronted with threats. The US should take note. But Tehran cannot simply ask; it must also give. It would not harm Iran's nuclear program if Tehran should decide to suspend its enrichment program in order to give a chance for the "serious negotiations" it says it wants. It could ask for a deadline for such negotiations to reach fruition."

HALE